

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Draft: JMC/NCF  
1 Nov 73

Dear Admiral:

Thank you for your letter of 25 September. As you know, I have given COINS and information systems a good deal of thought and will be continuing to do so. I agree with the views of the Science Panel, and I intend to undertake these matters as soon as possible and with priority. As you say, this means that we must delineate a community-wide concept and objectives, work out an agreed community plan of implementation, and establish an effective overall management structure.

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In pursuit of this broad subject of information flow, which is critical to our whole intelligence business and which requires considerable resources, I asked [redacted] as a principal of IRAC, to serve as my Executive Agent in appraising current COINS planning and progress. He is reporting to the IRAC on 5 November, and I understand a similar report had been prepared by him for the PFIAB at your previous meeting with him but that the Board did not get to that item.

The many problems that are related to COINS planning and management are properly identified in your letter, and they will be addressed after the IRAC session. I must also be mindful of restrictions on resources in evaluating the costs and benefits of COINS options. After IRAC, I will prepare a comprehensive response on where we are and advise you of any further instructions that I issue in relation to this matter.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Be assured that I place information handling technology and responsiveness among the top priorities in my management of the intelligence community. This is particularly true as one envisages the advent of new overhead collection systems, which could have considerable impact on our analytical methodologies and data base requirements.

W.E. Colby

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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**Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt**

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30 October 1973

DW  
10/30

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Fitts

SUBJECT: PFIAB Letter on COINS

1. Rewrite letter to Admiral Anderson (per instructions of the DCI) along these lines:

✓ -- We read the PFIAB loud and clear.

✓ -- I support the proposition that was reaffirmed in the Panel discussion.

✓ -- The prime matters requiring my attention are these...(take the three directions on page 2 of the Anderson memo). I intend to take care of these.

✓ -- Of course I have some restrictions on resources and we may find that some matters that might be considered for handling in the COINS system may not be practicable.

2. The people who are going to do it are the Chairman of the IHS who will ... etc. There are some areas in which we can make immediate progress (as indicated in the original memo to the Admiral).

✓ 3. Essentially, the DCI considered the letter to Admiral Anderson as a "down boy" approach. Somewhere in the memo, probably up near the front, the DCI would like to recognize that PFIAB sees a successful effort in the COINS area by the Intelligence Community as a model for use elsewhere in Government.

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Major General, USA  
D/DCI/IC

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

Dear Admiral:

Responding to your letter of September 25th, I want to let you know that the recommendations of the Board and the more detailed comments of the Science Panel on COINS are very helpful to me, particularly at this time when I recognize the need to develop my personal focus on this complex subject. I am aware of the Board's hope that a successful effort by the intelligence community in the COINS area may serve as a model for use elsewhere in the Government.

I agree with the Panel that our technical progress and planning must be placed in a larger managerial context for the entire community. I also share your view that we must move purposefully to delineate a community-wide concept and objectives, an agreed community plan of implementation, and an effective overall management structure.

As your letter points out, given the complexity of these matters, these tasks must be performed under my direct guidance. This is necessary, also, because of the potentially large resource requirements that could be involved over the next several years. Difficult judgments involving trade-offs may be required, and I must make them in the context of the total national intelligence program, aided by advice from IRAC.

The initial plan that I am now setting in motion includes setting up a COINS Assessment Group. This will be a small, high-level body, to advise me rather promptly on the concepts that should guide our further efforts. I want this group to help me to establish my own focus, and to provide some basic yardsticks for us all relative to objectives, possible costs, and cost effectiveness. Among others, this group will include [redacted] representative as well as the newly-appointed replacement for General Robert Taylor as Acting Chairman of the USIB Intelligence Information Handling Committee. The group will include advisors who can speak to questions of technology and of intelligence substance. I also have in mind your suggestion as to consultants, and I am considering further whether they might be most useful to me as part of the Assessment Group or working directly with my Office.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

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There are areas where we can make immediate progress. We are improving files now in COINS and working to set standards for those that are placed in the system in the relatively near future. Some of these specific initiatives are along the following lines:

-- File content and coverage. I am now working out a procedure to involve substantive USIB committees, working with the USIB Intelligence Information Handling Committee (IHC), in validating community needs for particular kinds of data and providing guidance on the content, coverage and format of files. For example, if COINS were to include a new file on the subject of nuclear energy, JAEIC should be involved in providing insights on behalf of potential users. The Intelligence Community (IC) Staff also has a responsibility in the matter of file content.

-- File completeness. A survey is now underway by the IC Staff to illustrate and characterize the security and dissemination restrictions that must be dealt with to make data in COINS files more complete and accessible throughout the community. Based on the results of this survey, which I expect to have in hand this month, we will begin an orderly re-examination of this problem.

-- User assistance. I am asking that the inter-agency Data Base Working Group make, as a regular part of its survey of files for COINS, an examination of the adequacy of cross-reference notations and user instructions contained in the files. Where worthwhile improvements can be made, taking account, however, of the prospective benefit as compared with the cost of rewriting computer programs, we will take the necessary action.

-- File reliability. I expect to share with USIB members the results of the work of the COINS Assessment Group. At that time, I will involve them in working out acceptable arrangements to share responsibilities for producing and maintaining certain COINS files and for assuring their accuracy and completeness. This will require us to make further hard judgments on the relative costs and benefits of existing and proposed files.

-- Analytical content. The IC Staff is now testing, for use in crisis and warning situations, the rapid exchange of current intelligence in a national operations and intelligence watch officers network running among the Washington area command centers. This project provides a test vehicle to gain practical experience with the use of intelligence materials that can be formatted and presented in an orderly way, thus enhancing the possibility for computer assistance to intelligence analysts. This experience can benefit files developed for COINS.

I intend to take advantage of the November 5th meeting of the Intelligence Resources Advisory Committee to discuss your letter and my response. I want to take account of the actions that Dr. Hall has taken over the past several months, and he will be reporting on COINS at this meeting.

As we move ahead this fall with the steps I have mentioned above, I will ensure that the President's Board and its Staff are in close contact with our ongoing activities.

W. E. Colby

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